

[Mrs. Walter Pinkus]

DUPLICATE COPY - December 12, 1939 S241-PLA

Week No. 14 Item No. 12 Words 3,000

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Stanley A. Kula ADDRESS 1374-35 Ave. Columbus, Nebr.

DATE November 22, 1939 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. Walter Pinkus, 2710-8 St. Columbus, Nebr.
2. Date and time of interview Nov. 20, 1939, 1:00-4:30 p.m.
3. Place of interview Home of interviewer
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant No One
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you No One
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. The house, is a five room bungalow, not modern, except for running water. It is situated in the south-west corner of the block, facing the south. It is painted a cream color, trimmed in green.

The room is also painted a cream color, it is the kitchen. A cook stove of modern design is here, the furniture is very common. There is a window to the east and one to the west. On the north is a pantry and another little room- the wash room. To the south is the entrance to

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the dining room, which is located to the southwest of the kitchen. Directly opposite to the east, is a bedroom/

There is a lawn in the front yard, with flowers and shrubs of many different kinds. The soil is sandy where it is extremely difficult to raise a lawn.

In the rear is a garden plot, where is raised the vegetables for the table. Also a chicken yard, where there are about 50 or 60 chickens visible, and a chicken coop is located at the far end of the lot.

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FORM B

Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Stanley A. Kula ADDRESS 1374-35 Ave. Columbus, Nebr.

DATE November 22, 1939 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs Walter Pinkus, 2710-8 St. Columbus, Nebr.

1. Ancestry Father - Joseph Trella Mother - Josephine Klich
2. Place and date of birth Township of Rudno, near Tarnov, Poland
3. Family Eight children, four boys and four girls
4. Place lived in, with dates Lived at Rudno until 1886, then in the township of Skyszow, near Tarnob, Poland until 1897. Came to Columbus, Nebraska then, and residing here ever since.
5. Education, with dates No education

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6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Spent from 1880 to 1886, working as a domestic. Mother and wife after that.

7. Special skills and interests Not especially skilled at anything. Likes to talk about the everyday happenings. Interested in her children and grand-children.

8. Community and religious activities She belongs to St. Bonaventure Catholic Church. She does not belong to any ladies' club, outside of visiting her friends , she takes no interest in Community affairs.

9. Description of informant She is a lady about 5 feet tall, fair complected, and having blue eyes. Her hair is grey and she is somewhat heavy set, weighing about 150 pounds.

10. Other points gained in interview Has a pleasant personality, likes to talk. She is also very active for a lady of her age(75). Very glad to tell me her story. She would relate happenings of her girlhood, as if they occurred just a short time ago.

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Stanley A. Kula ADDRESS 1374-35 Ave.

DATE November 22, 1939 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Walter Pinkus, 2710-8 St. Columbus, Nebr.

Poland, where I was born was a wonderful place, the land was fertile, different kinds of wild fruits grew and taking everything into consideration, the people were happy but for the most part very poor.

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My parents were likewise poor. However, they seemed to find time to tell stories and laugh, while working, seeming that they were contented with having enough to eat. That was the first and most important thing. After the harvest, the crop being a good one, everyone seemed to go about singing or whistling- there seemed to be a feeling of security in the thought that there was plenty to eat.

The farm, that my parents lived on was a small one, consisting of 4 or 5 acres— about 20 acres in the American way of measurement. The farms on the average were larger than that, but the folks didn't try to see how much land they could acquire, they worked and saved and enjoyed themselves, while raising their family of 5.

On this little farm, I was born. We didn't go to school on account of the great distance from home to school, besides everyone had their particular work to do. The people, at that time didn't think that education was of great importance. The main thing was to learn how to work and earn a living, because someday there would be a family of their own to feed. So education, was not considered of that importance, where would one use it in the rural area. The thought of going to the city and being a business man, or a teacher in the higher places of learning did not enter the mind. The young people were contented where they were.

About the first thing in the line of work, that I was required to do was to herd geese. This seemed to me to be a great responsibility, and latter grew to be quite tiresome. Of course there was no use of complaining, because if one did, more often than not, a licking was dealt out and the work being done anyway. So, it didn't take long and there was no complaining. However, sometimes other children would come to play and the worker forgot his and surely something went wrong, a licking was given the child for his not paying attention to his work. Licking were dealt out often, even to the larger children for this.

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A licking was easy to be had there, the people all used this form of thought for, as they put it, the education of the childred. This was not only a punishment for children, the grownups were whipped for different misdeameanors when sentenced by the court.

I started to work for the neighbors when quite young. The work was mostly helping with the harvest. Then if mosther needed me, I had to work at home. The farm, being small was taken of by the parents, and the children had to find work, which was not hard to do. The only draw-back was the small amount of pay.

When I was older I went to work for the lord of the district. My job was in the stable. Here I had to arise very early and wash the cows from head to foot, not only wash but scrub as well. They had to be spotlessly clean. After which they were fed and milked. The milk was taken to the city and sold. Woe to the person that washed a cow and found to be dirty somewhere by the boss. Without question he would administer a severe licking or whipping.

The lord, having a large establishment and the work, being done mostly by hand, had many bosses and workers. There was a boss for the horses, one for the cattle, one for the gardens, one for the farm-work, one for the forest, one for the orchard and etc. Wherever there was a certain kind of work, there was a certain boss for that particular work.

The lord himself did little or none of the actual bossing. If he had any special orders he would have the head foreman give the orders to the bosses. The lord and his family lived a life of ease and visiting. On rare occasions, the lord would go around and look over the different parts of his land or the barns and horses and his cattle and the like. I would watch for him and when he came close to me I would tie him with a ribbon kept handy for that purpose. On these occasions he would give me a dollar as a present. My boss didn't like this but as it was allright with the lord he didn't say much. He did tell us not to do this but there was surely a dollar in it for me and I tied the lord with this ribbon every chance I had.

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Now I don't mean to say that when I was through with the cows that my work was done. I had to help out here and there where they were short of workers, but the main work was to take care of the cows. There had to be milked three times a day. So the work was from early morn to dark, seven days a week. For this work I received about \$40 per year.

I stayed here and worked for a period of about three years. I had already met a handsome young man by the name of Stanislaus Wilczynski, who wanted to marry me. I liked this young man and finally married him in November of 1886.

I had saved a little of my salary, so with this and what my husband had we started our home on 6 acres of land that he received from the lord. A house had to be built and so many things bought but somehow we got along. Here I was starting a home of my own and things would surely out well for us. Surely, the work would be hard but work was hard anyplace, so that was of no concern. It would be more pleasant to work with the one you love.

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My husband received the farm from the lord, to do this he had to put in his application. It was granted and as pay for this land (about 6 acres) my husband agreed to work for the lord three days per week for so many years. In this time the land would be paid for.

This was the custom in Poland, for a young fellow to do if he had no resources of his own. In this way he eventually had a home and there was no mortgage to worry about.

If the owner of such a farm had a lot of work of his own, and couldn't go himself, he would have to hire someone to go in his place. If he couldn't hire anyone, he had to leave his work go and go to the lord and fulfill his part of the agreement. What would happen if he didn't go? He would be brought in court, charged with the misdemeanor. The sentence would probably be, so many strikes with a whip. This didn't happen very often because the men went when they were supposed to go. This work was also from dawn to dusk.

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We were too poor to have any horses and the heavy work had to be hired done by someone who had. In return we had to pay back by working ourselves for the one that did the plowing or whatever it happened to be.

Because of this and the agreement with the lord, we had to be away, working for someone else during the day and the work in our farm had to be done mostly at night.

Many times I took my little baby into the field with me and kept working, taking care of it as best I could. This did not seem unusual because everyone had to do the same, but now as one looks back, it seems almost impossible.

Once in a while the boss of the lord came to see why a certain lady did not report for work. If he found the lady at home, busy with a child he would lock the baby in the house and make the woman go to the lord as she was supposed to do. This was very infrequent, but it did happen.

The stoves that we had were made of brick. After these were once hot, they kept the house warm for a long time.

For baking bread the stove was first made hot - very hot. Then the fire was taken out and the stove cleaned. Into this would be put the bread and baked without any more fire. This firebox oven held about 16 large loaves at one time. So unless one had a very large family, the baking was done once every two weeks.

The bread was dark, because the flour was not bleached and the millers did not know how to bleach it. Many times it was ground at home.

This home mill was made of two stones. The bottom stone was round and the larger of the two. The top one, was the thickest and the smaller of the two. Both of these stones were flat. By an arrangement above these stones the mill was turned by hand. The flour that was milled in this mill was the whole-wheat, after the grinding it had to be sieved and re-

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sieved to get the bran and shorts out of it. This did a crude job of it but many times that was the best that could be done at the time.

This mill was not only used for grinding wheat, but all the other cereals as well.

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There were many wild fruits and berries of all kinds. Most of these could be dried but a few could be had only in season, and could not be dried.

There were wild plums, wild cherries, raspberries and various other fruit. We also had numerous kinds of mushrooms. These were very hardy and picked in quite large quantities. In season they were prepared fresh and at other times they would be taken from the drystock.

In a way the people were raised on a vegetarian diet, meat was not to be had very often. A piece of pork was very delicious and eaten only on special holidays. Not that it was against the law but the common people could not afford such delicacies.

Cheese was also on the diet, a form of cottage cheese. If this was made correctly, it made a wholesome tidbit. Very delicious. For the milk would be allowed to curdle, care taken that it would not become sour. Then the whey would be drained off and the cheese salted and pressed. To this mixture would be added some cream in a day or two. After a couple of weeks it would be ready to eat.

The country in the early spring was a gathering of many different kinds of song birds. Early in the morning could be heard the warblers, sparrows and every other, seemed to be happy and joyous to be alive. There is no comparison to the songbirds in this country to the birds we had in the old country, both in the numbers and the different kinds.

The stork was a visitor every year. It was a large bird, and not too well adapted to the building of a home. The men would often put an old wagon wheel in a tree or on a house

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to help these birds start a nest. On this they (the birds) would put a few sticks and some grass- this was a very crude nest compared to some of the other bird homes.

The people there never bothered the nest or the stork itself. The legend of the people was that the stork was the product of men. It seems that in the time of Christ, the Lord commanded some men to get out of his way- and today there is the bird the stork.

Sometimes the storks would arrive so early in the spring that the people had to feed them and care for them until mild weather. The stork was also known to be an expert forecaster of the kind of year that was in the offing. If he raised two children, the people knew that the year would be a successful one. If however, he threw one of the children out, the year was to be a hard one, and if he threw both of the children out and didn't raise any, the season would almost be a failure.

My mother often related stories about the Polish revolution. At that time she was working for one of the lords in the community being only about eighteen years old.

This revolution was to be against the Emperor but in a very short time turned to be a revolution against the lords. Most of the men took whatever they could grab and went wherever they thought they could find a lord. Most of the time he was killed and many times so badly beaten that he died in a short time. Mother says that they carried scythes, pitch-forks, whips, hoes and what have you/

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This revolution only lasted a few days. And after the commotion most of the rich were killed off. Mother says that the dead were gathered and hauled to the different cemeteries in wagons. The most awful sight that one could imagine.

The owner of the estate where she worked ran away to the forest. In just a little while the men came inquiring about the lord.

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While the lord was running away, his wife had not the time to go with him. Mother hid her in the stable, covering her with manure, and when the men came to inquire about the lord and finding him gone, they inquired about the whereabouts of the lady of the house. To this the young girl replied, "that she didn't know where either had gone"/ The leader suspected that she wasn't telling the truth, and ordered the men to give her so many stripes with a whip. Some of the men however, persuaded the leader to leave mother alone.

After the men had gone, the lady of the house came out of her hiding place but with a great fear for the safety of her husband. In several days he came back home.

By this time the anger of the mob had subsided and when the revolutionists learned of the return of this lord, they immediately came with a wagon and took him in it. Among the men was my father who pleaded that the life of this lord be spared, which was done. He was taken to Tarnov and forced to sign papers, giving the common people more rights than they had before.

One of these was that the lord didn't require as much labor as before for the purchase of land from him by a young couple just starting on their own. This was of great benefit to the young people. The lords never again tried to make slaves out of the common people. The conditions were still hard but not as before.

After this commotion the properties were restored to the rightful owners or their heirs and the prising came to an end.

Mother often used to talk about two straight years that they had their crops hailed out. She didn't say which ones they were, or if she did I don't remember but anyway they were hailed out twice in succession. That is two years straight.

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The first year was very bad, but they had some stores left to go on from the year before, but the second year there was nothing to be left from the year before and the fight for existence began.

There was a certain kind of root of a weed that grew wild in the country that the people dug and dried. Out of these roots they made flour. Also another kind of weed was hunted for the tea that was drand. Many people died of this kind of diet and others poisoned. The ones that lived thought that the world was coming to an end. The people would swell around the eyes and different parts of the body, making a human look fierce. Whether the government didn't care or what, the people had to look for their own preservation. If they didn't- starvation was close at hand. Many actually died from starvation and many from this poisonous diet. There was no government relief to help the poor people and keep them from actual starvation.

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I think it is wonderful how the government of this country takes care of its people and helps them when and if they need help, but in the old country it was different. You either took care of yourself or starved. If one starved he was just dead and that's as far as the government cared.

Mother says, "that father sold a cow in town, not being able to buy anything in the line of eats brought the money home and throwing it on the table, saying, here children is some gold- make something to eat out of it, I couldn't buy anything in town".

This must have been a very desperate moment in fathers' life, not being able to buy anything for the family to eat, and probably starving himself.

When working in the field, the men and the women worked in their bare feet. That was the custom. Of course they had shoes but these had to be saved for Sunday. (A pair of shoes was very expensive) Even in the winter, when it was not too cold the men, women and

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children went about bare-footed. Sometimes the men would take straw and wrap their feet then, somekind of cloth on the outside to hold the straw in place and go about doind their work in this manner.

Even on Sunday, when going to and from Church the men and women would carry their shoes, stopping to put them on as they neared the Church.

The people would do the same when going to the city, as they neared the city, they would sit down by the side of the road and put their shoes on and proceed to the market in full dress. Upon leaving the shoes came off at the edge of town and the return journey wasmade barefooted.

Most of the business was conducted by the Jewish people, it was they that went to school and could see the possibilities of a good education. One never saw a Jewish boy or girl was to work hard, they always seemed to have a good education and commanded the good jobs. The common people couldn't see that far and then the rich didn't want the common folk to raise themselves but to stay and not know anything, but what their stomachs taught them. So schooling was of secondary importance, and I receiving none. The only education I have was gathered from the children after they were going to school here in this country.

After farming our little farm in Poland for a period of about seven years, we decided to sell our property and come to the United States of America. The land of promise, We had many friends that had come here and word came back that most of them became wealthy.

After selling our holdings we set out for the new world. Taking two of our children with us we were on our way. We arrived in Columbus, Nebraska, in the spring of 1893. By this time our funds had depleted to the grand sum of \$100.

Here we were and no place to go., We stayed with friends for about a year, deciding to buy a small property intown and making our home.

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This we did by purchasing a lot in the city of Columbus and building a frame structure, consisting of two rooms and not even having any plaster or siding. In this we lived for five years.

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By this time we, build a better and larger home. This home was plastered and had siding. We lived in this for five years. Then we built the third home, which was the best one. In this home, Mr. Wi#cynski passed to his reward on Oct. 22, 1923.

He never was what one might say healthy. He lived to a fairly old age by taking care of himself. He was past 70 years when he passed away.

Things weren't easy for me here in this country. I did washing for different people her intown. To do this I had to go to their home, and the pay was around \$1 per day. Now it is so much per pound.

At that time the washing was done on a scrub-board, all by hand. There were no electric washing machines as there are today. But I stayed right with it and complained not, glad to get the work.

My husband stayed at home and took care of the children, thus leaving me free to go and do this work. His health prevented him from doing very heavy work.. Anyway all the work that there was for a foreigner around here was on the railroad and away from home. After paying his board and room he wouldn't have much left. I thought that I could make more at washing while he took care of the little folks.

In 1926 I married Mr. Walter Pinkus, this is where I live at present. Mr. Pinkus can find no work because he is too old and I am too old to go out and do heavy work. This makes it very hard for us to make a go of things. But we just plag away from day to day.

At present I have four children living. The other four have passed away.

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Two of my boys live here in Columbus, one on the farm and the other in town.

The two girls are married and have families of their own. They both live away from here, one lives in Omaha and the other in Texas.

I received a letter from the one in Texas the other day. In it she states that the vegetables are ripening and how they like their new home. According to the letter, they are never coming back to Nebraska to live.

Even for my 75 years, I do all my own work around the house and find time to go out and take care of my few chickens. In the summertime I also do much of the work in the garden. Watching things grow is a real pleasure to me.

The past number of years the drought made it hard to raise anything, even though we put a great amount of water on it. The air is just too dry.

Last year, we had no potatoes whatever. The other garden vegetables grew fairly well but not like if there was plenty of rain.

It wouldn't be so bad, but for the last several years it's dry and the next year it's drier. What will the eather be next year? Sure does look bad at present, and they say that "it will be another dry year next year. Let's home and pray so the Lord will bless and permit us to raise a crop again.